



monkeyface

Quadrula metanevra

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Mollusca
Class: Bivalvia

Features

The thick shell of the monkeyface mussel has large knobs along a ridge on the posterior side. The anterior end is rounded while the posterior is square and indented. The shell is brown. Young mussels may have a zig-zag pattern of green lines on the shell. The inside of the shell is white. This mussel grows to four inches long. The name "monkeyface" comes from an indentation on the posterior margin of the shell that gives the appearance of the profile of a chimpanzee.

Natural History

The monkeyface lives in rivers in areas of gravel or sand and gravel. Its distribution in Iowa is not well documented. Freshwater mussels have an elaborate reproductive system. During spawning, males release sperm into the water. The sperm are drawn inside the female's shell, where they fertilize eggs in her body. The fertilized eggs develop into larvae (glochidia) and are stored for a time in the female's gills. When the glochidia mature, the female generally expels them into the water where they must attach as parasites to the gills or fins of fish. Larvae remain on the host fish

for a period of weeks or months. Young mussels then detach from their host and drop to the bottom of the body of water. Hosts for this mussel include sunfish and sauger. Mussels are filter-feeders, bringing in water and the organic matter it contains through the incurrent siphon, filtering the particles out, then sending the rest of the water away from the body through the excurrent siphon. Particles filtered include plankton and detritus. Mature mussels spend most of their lives, which range from 10 to 100 years, partially or wholly buried in the bottom substrate.

Habitats

interior rivers and streams; Mississippi River

Iowa Status

uncommon; native

Iowa Range

Mississippi River and eastern one-half of Iowa, excluding extreme northern counties and south-central Iowa

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.